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Special Political and Decolonization Committee (Fourth Committee)

Summary record of the 27th meeting
Held at Headquarters, New York, on Wednesday, 8 November 2017, at 10 a.m.

Chair: Ms. Özgür (Vice-Chair) ..... (Turkey)
later: Mr. Ramírez Carreño (Chair) ..... (Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela)

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In the absence of Mr. Ramírez Carreño (Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela), Ms. Özgür (Turkey), Vice-Chair, took the Chair.

The meeting was called to order at 10.10 a.m.

Agenda item 54: Report of the Special Committee to Investigate Israeli Practices Affecting the Human Rights of the Palestinian People and Other Arabs of the Occupied Territories (*continued*) (A/72/296, A/72/314, A/72/538, A/72/539, A/72/564 and A/72/565)

1. **Mr. Elshandawily** (Egypt) said that, as detailed in the report of the Special Committee (A/72/539), Israel was committing numerous violations in the Occupied Territories. Thus, a renewed sense of urgency was required to deliver much-needed peace by implementing the two-State solution in accordance with the relevant United Nations resolutions and the Arab Peace Initiative.

2. To that end, a resumption of the peace process and the cessation of all unilateral measures that could endanger the two-State solution were imperative. In particular, it was vital to halt all settlement activity in Arab lands, including the occupied Syrian Golan. Settlements presented grave danger to the two-State solution since they destroyed the viability of any future Palestinian State and hardened negotiation stances.

3. Every effort must be made to seize the opportunity presented by the recent Palestinian reconciliation agreement, which could potentially reinvigorate the peace process. Egypt, convinced that a solution was not impossible, called upon all parties with influence to help drive the peace process towards a just and lasting settlement. As evidenced by the Arab Peace Initiative of 2002, peace represented a strategic choice for Palestinians and the entire Arab world. Furthermore, peace would act as a bulwark against terrorism and unlock the region's development potential, bringing prosperity to its people.

4. **Ms. Sughayar** (Jordan) said that the long list of human rights violations committed by Israel on a systematic and daily basis was plain for all to see. The unilateral actions of Israel engendered violence and hampered progress towards peace, security and stability in the region. Ongoing illegal settlement expansion in the occupied Arab territories, including recently published plans for a settlement overlooking the Old City of Jerusalem, undermined regional and international efforts to initiate negotiations and reduce tensions in the region, thus demonstrating that Israel had no intention of making peace with the Palestinians.

5. The recurrent attacks perpetrated by Israel on the Haram al Sharif/Al-Aqsa Mosque were in violation of its obligations as an occupying Power under international law. They not only damaged relationships between Israel and neighbouring countries but were an act of provocation against the entire Arab world. Recalling the historic Hashemite Kingdom's guardianship of Islamic and Christian holy sites, including the Haram al Sharif/Al-Aqsa Mosque, she said that Jordan condemned all attempts by Israel to change the religious character and legal status of the city of Jerusalem, and would continue to use all legal and diplomatic options at its disposal to preserve the historic character of the city.

6. The unacceptable practices of the occupying Power, including discrimination, oppression, marginalization and excessive use of force, among other human rights abuses, served to exacerbate tensions in the region and were undoubtedly the principal driver of violent extremism in the Occupied Palestinian Territories. Underlining the central importance of the Palestinian question, she called on the United Nations to compel Israel to cease its illegal practices and its unilateral attempts to impose a new status quo in Jerusalem and the Occupied Palestinian Territories. Convinced that peace could be achieved only through the two-State solution, her Government would not be deterred from its efforts to establish a sovereign, independent, and geographically contiguous Palestinian State on the basis of the 1967 borders and with East Jerusalem as its capital, in line with the relevant United Nations resolutions and in the interests of both the Palestinian and the Israeli peoples. Jordan welcomed all initiatives to that end, including the Arab Peace Initiative, to which Israel had not responded to date.

7. The endeavours of the Palestinian parties, with the assistance of Egypt, to achieve national unity and end the division that had existed since 2007, showed that obstacles could be overcome, when there was enough political will, and that a peaceful settlement to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict was achievable as long as narrow individual interests were set aside in favour of fostering an environment of peace, security and stability for both the Israeli and Palestinian peoples. Every attempt to frustrate progress towards that objective had a damaging effect on all other efforts to achieve peace.

8. Jordan called on the international community, in particular the most influential global Powers, to help both parties to the conflict to overcome the barriers to peace by engaging in serious, time-bound negotiations with a view to achieving a two-State solution, thus bringing peace and stability to both Israel and Palestine.

9. **Mr. Bin Momen** (Bangladesh) said that it was regrettable that the Israeli authorities had once again refused to cooperate with the Special Committee by denying it access to the Occupied Palestinian Territories and by failing to issue travel permits to Palestinians wishing to testify before it in Amman. He hoped that the Israeli authorities would change their stance and give due consideration to the urgent and legitimate recommendations addressed to them by the Special Committee.

10. The Special Committee continued to serve a critically important purpose by keeping the cause of the Palestinian people and other Arab populations under Israeli occupation alive and relevant against the backdrop of other armed conflicts around the world. The continued existence of Israeli settlements and the construction of the wall in the West Bank and East Jerusalem were the most blatant symbols of Israeli occupation and had been identified by the international community as posing the greatest threat to the viability of the two-State solution. The settlements in question, the illegality of which had been affirmed by the International Court of Justice, continued to encroach upon the living space and agricultural lands of the Palestinian people, causing their displacement, disrupting their livelihoods and contributing to the disappearance of the traditional lifestyle of some communities. It was regrettable that the Israeli authorities continued to allow settlers to engage in indiscriminate violence against Palestinians with impunity, while individuals and entities engaged in the unregulated exploitation of natural resources in the occupied territories.

11. The excessive use of force by Israel, which continued unabated, violated the Geneva Conventions of 1949 and constituted a serious crime under international criminal law. Indiscriminate attacks against medical facilities and vehicles were further aggravating an already dire humanitarian situation. It was deplorable that Israel persisted with its degrading and often inhumane treatment of Palestinian detainees, including children, and routinely denied them access to justice. Equally disturbing were reports of the Israeli authorities refusing to allow the return of the bodies of deceased Palestinians for a dignified burial.

12. The Israeli land and sea blockade of Gaza, which was entering its eleventh year, was a particularly egregious form of collective punishment against two million people, purportedly in retaliation against certain individuals. The frequent and intentional disruption of humanitarian assistance and other basic amenities had made the living conditions of Palestinians in Gaza almost untenable. The international community should prevail upon Israel to lift the unjustified blockade on Gaza as a matter of urgency and allow the people living there and in other occupied territories to enjoy their human rights and fundamental freedoms.

13. In that connection, Bangladesh welcomed Security Council resolution 2334 (2016) and recalled that a peaceful, just and lasting solution to the protracted crisis in the Occupied Palestinian Territories was set out in all the relevant Security Council resolutions, as well as the Quartet road map, the Arab Peace Initiative and the principle of land for peace. The political will to move in the direction of that solution was, however, still lacking.

14. Bangladesh supported all the recommendations made by the Special Committee and the Secretary-General in their respective reports and would continue to support the efforts of the Special Committee and other relevant United Nations entities to raise awareness of the grave human rights violations and humanitarian consequences suffered by the Palestinian people under an illegal occupation that had lasted for half a century and was an affront to the principles enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations.

15. **Mr. Krasna** (Israel) said that, once again, the Fourth Committee had met to discuss a one-sided, biased report that was the product of an illegitimate, prejudiced mandate, drafted by individuals with a predetermined and discriminatory anti-Israeli agenda. Valuable time and scarce resources had been squandered to produce a collection of unsubstantiated rumours and baseless allegations. It was unfortunate that, year after year, United Nations funds were spent on such a futile endeavour. The Special Committee did nothing to help create the conditions required to re-establish a meaningful dialogue and bilateral negotiations between the parties with a view to bringing the conflict to an end.

16. The report neglected to mention all the ways in which Hamas, an internationally designated terrorist organization, had imposed its brutal policies on the people of Gaza and how it had diverted humanitarian aid to support its malign activities. The report also audaciously criticized the Israeli judicial system as a whole, despite the fact that Israel had always strived to protect the rights of all its citizens, both Jews and Arabs, and had enshrined those rights in its Declaration of Independence. Israel was the only country in the Middle East where there was fair, equal and open access to justice, and the only democracy in the region where all persons were entitled to appeal to the courts and challenge government decisions.

17. The report failed to mention the significant steps that Israel was taking to help the residents of the Gaza Strip, even as it dealt with serious and tangible security

concerns, including regular rocket attacks against its citizens and ongoing attempts by Hamas to seize goods and raw materials needed for the reconstruction of Gaza. Hamas routinely looted humanitarian supplies, using them to construct terror tunnels and to create a military build-up. It also co-opted to that end people entering Israel for critical medical treatment. Moreover, the report made only scant reference to the impact of the Palestinian Authority's sanctions on daily life in Gaza, especially on the electricity crisis.

18. As part of its efforts to aid the Palestinian people, particularly those living in the Gaza Strip, Israel had been working closely with the United Nations to facilitate the work of the Gaza Reconstruction Mechanism. To date, over 100,000 houses had been either built or renovated. Of the 817 public projects authorized by the Mechanism, 160 had been completed and 488 were in progress. Israel had facilitated the transfer of over 6 million tons of building materials for use in projects funded by the international community. Workers, including humanitarian personnel, ambulances, agricultural produce and other supplies and goods could all enter and, where relevant, be transported through Israel without restriction. Only supplies and goods that were routinely exploited for terrorist purposes were subject to prohibitions.

19. Despite the ongoing threat posed by rocket attacks launched from Gaza by Hamas, Israel had demonstrated its commitment to economic policies aimed at improving the living conditions of the civilian population while responding to the basic security needs of Israeli citizens. However, the free movement of people and goods in the region still entailed a security risk; the Israeli security forces foiled attempts to smuggle goods with a military application on a daily basis.

20. No attempt had been made in the report to present the reality on the ground in an even-handed and professional manner. It made no reference to the 17 Israelis who had been murdered in terrorist attacks since the beginning of 2017 or to the impact of the situation in Syria on the people living in the Golan Heights. Moreover, it made no mention of the significant humanitarian aid supplied by Israel to the victims of the ongoing war in Syria, including the treatment provided to the wounded and sick in Israeli medical facilities. According to the Multi-faith Alliance for Syrian Refugees, the steady flow of humanitarian aid was not only helping tens of thousands of war victims in southern Syria, but was changing minds and countering generations of hostility, promoting dialogue and understanding between Syrians and Israelis. Furthermore, some 600 children with disabilities or diseases such as cancer and diabetes had been brought to Israel for treatment, an additional 1,000 children had been brought to the country for medical examinations and large quantities of food, gasoline and clothing had been transported over the Israeli-Syrian border. He failed to understand how such facts had eluded the expert investigators responsible for drafting the report.

21. Israel categorically rejected the mandate of the Special Committee and its work, and called upon all countries that believed in peace and dialogue to vote against the resolution supporting that Committee's mandate.

22. **Ms. Lodhi** (Pakistan) said that the annual occasion to discuss the report of the Special Committee was anything but a worthless spectacle. It was regrettable that Israel refused to cooperate with the Special Committee in its commendable work.

23. The Fourth Committee was meeting at a particularly poignant moment in the history of Palestine. The previous week had marked the centennial of the infamous Balfour Declaration, which had paved the way for the dispossession and displacement of entire generations of Palestinians and the denial of their fundamental right to return to their land. The situation in the occupied territories attested to a systematic pattern of human rights violations that affected every aspect of the lives of Palestinians. Arbitrary administrative detention, including of children, demolition of homes, revocation of land rights and other forms of collective punishment had become grim facts of daily life and a major cause of suffering for the Palestinian people.

24. Countless Security Council and General Assembly resolutions had demanded an end to the illegal Israeli occupation of Palestine. However, the international community had so far failed to tip the scales of justice in favour of the long-suffering Palestinians. The political reconciliation reached between Fatah and Hamas in Cairo in October 2017 offered new reasons for hope and optimism. It not only restored political unity within the Palestinian ranks but also lent renewed strength and vigour to the legitimate cause of the Palestinian people. The international community must now help to sustain the positive momentum. As a first step, the illegal and oppressive Israeli siege of Gaza must be lifted.

25. There could be no peace in the Middle East without the resolution of the Palestinian issue. The establishment of an independent, contiguous and viable Palestinian State on the basis of internationally agreed parameters and the pre-1967 borders, with Al-Quds al-Sharif as its capital, was the only guarantee of

enduring peace in the Middle East. Nothing was more detrimental to that vision than the illegal Israeli settlements in the occupied territories. Yet Israel, in blatant disregard of international law and the collective will of the international community, as reflected in Security Council resolution 2334 (2016), had chosen to step up its settlement-related activities in a move that constituted a tragic setback to peace and a retreat from a two-State solution to a one-State "illusion". The tensions surrounding Al-Aqsa Mosque in July 2017 had served as yet another reminder of the ever-present danger posed by unilateral Israeli attempts to alter the existing status quo in the Old City of Jerusalem. Such actions were an unacceptable provocation that must be deterred. Creating alternative facts on the ground could not change historical realities or take away the legal rights of people living under foreign occupation, whether in Palestine or elsewhere.

26. A just peace in Palestine was not only important for the region; it was also the primary condition for global peace and security. A two-State solution remained imperative, as there was no contingency plan for the region. A long-term solution would also require the withdrawal of occupation forces from all Arab lands, including the Syrian Golan Heights.

27. In closing, she said that the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) had not only played an invaluable role in helping Palestinian communities meet their basic needs but had also served as a vehicle for political stability and social cohesion in its areas of operation. The integrity of its activities could be maintained only through sufficient, predictable and sustained funding. However, the critical funding shortfall in its 2017 programme budget was set to thwart that ambition. Pakistan had doubled its voluntary contribution to UNRWA for 2017 and would continue to support its important work by all means possible.

28. **Mr. Alswar** (Bahrain) said that his delegation commended the Special Committee for its ongoing efforts to conduct its work despite the lack of cooperation from the Israeli occupying Power. It noted with concern, however, that, after 50 years, the Israeli occupation of Palestinian territory continued to have catastrophic humanitarian, economic and social consequences and that the prospect of achieving a just and lasting settlement to the question of Palestine was more distant than ever. Bahrain condemned the repeated inflammatory attacks on Al-Aqsa Mosque and the arbitrary security measures imposed by Israel to close the Mosque to Muslims and turn it into a military zone. It also condemned the acts of violence committed with impunity by Israeli settlers in the occupied territories, and called on all parties to exercise restraint in the use of force and to abide by international treaties, in particular the Geneva Convention relative to the Protection of Civilian Persons in Time of War. His delegation reiterated its call for the international community, in particular the Security Council, to take action to end all violations of international law, including all illegal settlement activity and attempts to alter the legal and historical status quo in Jerusalem, and to ensure compliance with the relevant United Nations resolutions. The question of Palestine would remain a top priority for his Government, which would continue to support all efforts to achieve a just and lasting settlement based on the two-State solution, in line with international law and the Arab Peace Initiative, so as to offer all States in the region an opportunity for development and stability.

29. **Mr. Maidin** (Brunei Darussalam) said that, against a backdrop of escalating tensions and violence in the region, illegal settlement activities and policies had resulted in the deterioration of the humanitarian, economic and social conditions of the Palestinian people, depriving them of their basic rights and impeding the attainment of regional peace, security and stability.

30. In July 2017, Brunei Darussalam had joined a number of other countries in deploring the provocative action of the occupying Power in preventing Palestinians from worshipping freely at Al-Aqsa Mosque. It was essential for all parties to exercise restraint and to respect the historical and legal status quo.

31. Diplomatic consultations were key to achieving a solution to the protracted conflict. Accordingly, his delegation welcomed the fact that the Secretary-General had visited the region in August 2017, and appreciated his commitment to a two-State solution. However, the parties concerned must now engage in genuine negotiations to agree on a sustainable solution. His country stood ready to offer full support in that regard.

32. Brunei Darussalam reaffirmed its long-standing solidarity with the people of Palestine in their struggle for peace and their inalienable right to self-determination, their right to return to their homeland and their right to establish an independent, viable and sovereign State of Palestine, based on pre-1967 borders with East Jerusalem as its capital. He called for further collective efforts to improve the daily lives of the Palestinian people and urged the United Nations to galvanize multilateral efforts more effectively in order to achieve lasting peace and stability in the region.

33. **Ms. Rodríguez Abascal** (Cuba) said that her delegation was deeply concerned at the continued suffering of the Palestinian people following more than 50 years of foreign occupation by Israel, in violation of international and humanitarian law. The reports before the Fourth Committee documented how Israel continued to implement its unlawful colonizing policies, including the confiscation of Palestinian land and property, expansion of settlements, including in East Jerusalem, and forced displacement of Palestinians.

34. After 51 years of occupation, Israel still had not complied with the Security Council resolutions regarding the occupied Syrian Golan, thus violating the human rights of the Syrian citizens of the Golan. It was regrettable that the Security Council had not succeeded in reaching an agreement to bring an end to the aggressive, colonialist policies and practices of Israel. Moreover, the blockade of the Gaza Strip, which had inflicted an economic and humanitarian crisis on more than two million Palestinians for over a decade, must be lifted immediately.

35. Her delegation welcomed recent efforts to reinitiate peace talks between Palestinians and Israelis and to foster intra-Palestinian unity. Cuba also reaffirmed its support for the admission of Palestine as a full Member of the United Nations and called on the Security Council to officially declare its support for such a development. If the Council failed to do so, the General Assembly must act decisively. Her Government would continue to support a broad, just and lasting settlement based on a two-State solution leading to Palestinian self-determination with a free, independent and sovereign State within 1967 borders, with East Jerusalem as its capital and with the right of return of Palestinian refugees.

36. **Mr. Arcia Vivas** (Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela), commending the Special Committee for shedding light on the suffering that the criminal practices of Israel in the Occupied West Bank, including East Jerusalem, and in the Gaza Strip were causing to Palestinians, said that its work had been encumbered by the occupying Power's failure to cooperate, in violation of its legal obligations under international law. That hostile attitude clearly demonstrated that the Israeli authorities wished to conceal the truth from the international community and to subvert the Committee's work.

37. There was no doubt that the occupying Power intended to pursue its inhumane practices and continue ignoring the relevant United Nations resolutions. The exponential increase in construction in 2016 and plans for a further 5,000 homes in 2017 revealed the extent of its ambitions to expand its territory at the expense of Palestine. Further construction would require continued land confiscations, house demolitions and forced expulsion of Palestinian civilians in the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, using legal and administrative sleights of hand.

38. The punitive demolition of family homes, residency revocations, notifications of a supposed lack of building permits and excessive use of force by Israeli occupying forces directed at Palestinian residents constituted a form of collective punishment and must be ended. Furthermore, it was unacceptable that Israel continued to practice arbitrary detention. As of May 2017, over 6,000 Palestinians were languishing in Israeli prisons, with some 500 people under administrative detention without formal charges, demonstrating an insolent disregard for international humanitarian law. Venezuela called for the release of the 331 minors who were unjustly imprisoned in Israel.

39. The devastating repercussions of the inhumane blockade imposed on the Gaza Strip included arbitrary restrictions on freedom of movement that hampered the economic and social life of its residents, causing 900,000 people to be dependent on humanitarian aid. The blockade, which could not be justified by security concerns, should be unanimously condemned by the international community and must be lifted immediately. Israel must also withdraw from the occupied Syrian Golan, where it continued to implement discriminatory practices against the local population.

40. In the face of such impunity, with Israeli practices often amounting to war crimes in complete disregard for international law and the relevant resolutions of the Security Council, Venezuela wondered how long the international community could remain apathetic. His delegation welcomed the recommendations included in the report; however, it feared that as long as the occupying Power felt protected by powerful allies it would continue with its plans to destroy the two-State solution. Venezuela reiterated its support for that two-State solution, which was the only way to realize the Palestinians' right to their own free and sovereign State, living in peace with the State of Israel within pre-1967 borders, with East Jerusalem as its capital. His delegation urged the international community to engage in reviving the peace process, and called for Israel to contribute to peace by ceasing all practices against the interests of the Palestinian people.

41. **Ms. Demirel** (Turkey) said that the Israeli-Palestinian conflict remained the central challenge to regional and global peace and stability. For any peace initiative to succeed, United Nations resolutions must be respected and the rule of law must be upheld. Accordingly, in line

with the calls of the international community, Israel should immediately cease all settlement activity as well as home demolitions, land confiscation and other actions denying Palestinians the right to development. The continuation of such policies with complete impunity deepened the sense of injustice, creating growing mistrust towards the international community and breeding desperation. Furthermore, attempts to change the historical status of Haram al-Sharif and measures violating the freedom of worship jeopardized peaceful coexistence.

42. Turkey welcomed the intra-Palestinian reconciliation agreement reached on 12 October 2017, since the Palestinians needed to voice their legitimate demands in unity in order to reach a lasting peace. The agreement clearly referred to ending the occupation and establishing the sovereignty of the Palestinian State over all territories occupied in 1967. The international community must respond to that resolute step. Palestinians deserved a strong confirmation of the two-State vision and genuine efforts to end the protracted humanitarian crisis in Gaza.

43. *Mr. Ramírez Carreño (Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela) took the Chair.*

44. **Mr. Zaayman** (South Africa) said that, in the current context of heightened tension between Palestinians and Israelis, the report of the Special Committee confirmed the lack of progress made in relation to the human rights of the Palestinian people and other Arabs of the occupied territories. The actions of Israel, such as the demolition of Palestinian houses, the expansion of settlements and the exploitation of natural resources, were leading to an escalation in violence and were contrary to international law. Israeli practices also included State-sanctioned land seizures, retroactive legalization of outposts, denial of building permits and restrictions on movement. There was no doubt that the human rights violations associated with the occupation were inexorably linked to the settlement enterprise. Such activity undermined the two-State solution and threatened the viability of a future Palestinian State.

45. The situation could not be allowed to continue as it was increasingly becoming an impediment to the peace, security, stability and development of the wider Middle East region. Consequently, all Member States should direct the parties towards a lasting solution to the conflict. South Africa, concerned at the increase in settler violence against Palestinians, appealed to the Israeli authorities to hold perpetrators accountable. It also stressed the urgent need for Israel to lift the blockade of Gaza, which was worsening the already dire socioeconomic and humanitarian situation. Palestinian energy dependence on Israel weighed further on the economic situation.

46. His delegation remained concerned at the plight of Palestinian prisoners and detainees, specifically women and children, and called on Israel to respect the human rights of all Palestinian prisoners. South Africa advocated for comprehensive and unconditional negotiations between Israel and Palestine in the pursuit of lasting peace on the basis of the two-State solution.

47. **Mr. Atlassi** (Morocco) said that, during the reporting period, Israel had committed countless breaches of international law by continuing its policy of illegal settlement expansion, seizure of Palestinian property and judaization of Jerusalem, among other unwarranted abuses which were clearly documented in international texts, including Security Council resolutions. As Chair of the Al-Quds Committee of the Organization of the Islamic Conference, Morocco condemned all attempts by Israel to alter the religious character, demographic composition and legal status of the City of Jerusalem, in flagrant violation of international resolutions which clearly defined Jerusalem as an integral part of the Palestinian Territory occupied in 1967. The reprehensible actions of Israel were designed to stoke religious and sectarian conflict and represented a great source of injustice not only for Palestinians, but for millions of Muslims the world over. They also undermined international efforts to reinitiate negotiations and achieve a just and lasting solution to the conflict in the Middle East.

48. It was the duty of the international community to break the current deadlock and bring both Israel and Palestine back to the negotiating table to engage in sincere, time-bound negotiations which would ultimately result in a genuine two-State solution, on the basis of the 1967 borders, with East Jerusalem as the capital of Palestine, in line with international resolutions and the Arab Peace Initiative, thus permitting both Israel and Palestine to live in peaceful and harmonious coexistence.

49. **Mr. Belkheir** (Libya) said that the incessant violence and abuses perpetrated by Israel throughout its abominable 50-year occupation of the Palestinian territories and the Syrian Golan, in flagrant violation of international resolutions and with blatant disregard for humanitarian values, had led Palestinians and Arabs to lose hope in a peaceful future. Since 1948, the United Nations and the main global Powers had been exerting political pressure on Palestinians and Arabs to accept a two-State solution and thereby recognize the so-called State of Israel, but despite the acceptance by Palestine

to proceed with the two-State solution under the Oslo Accords, the United Nations and the countries of the West had done nothing to enforce the Israeli side of the bargain by ending the occupation and granting Palestinians the right to establish a free and independent State of Palestine and thus achieve lasting peace. Consisting of nothing but a series of failed initiatives and international agreements and an endless stream of statements condemning the Israeli abuses, the continued lack of international action was seriously undermining the credibility of the United Nations.

50. Faced with the appalling account of the ongoing illegal Israeli practices detailed in the report of the Special Committee, no reasonable person could understand how a country with such immense military and financial resources, as well as support from powerful States, could continue to deride the international community by presenting itself as a victim. He wondered what exactly Israel wished to achieve through its brutal treatment of Palestinians. While his delegation endorsed the recommendations contained in the report, those were only makeshift solutions. The international community must demonstrate its commitment to the two-State solution by ending the occupation, implementing the relevant international agreements — including by addressing the issue of refugees in line with Security Council resolution 194 (III) — and giving protection to Palestinians in their own independent and sovereign State, with full membership in the United Nations.

51. The fact that Israel not only refused to end its occupation of the Syrian Golan, but also continued to construct illegal settlements and violate the economic, social, cultural, civil and political rights of Syrian people, including through its decision to hold municipal elections in the occupied Syrian Golan in 2018, served as yet more proof of its blatant disregard for international law, including the Fourth Geneva Convention.

52. He expressed concern at Israeli attempts to exploit circumstances in the region, noting that, according to certain media reports, Israel had provided logistical support to internationally recognized terrorist groups operating in the areas adjacent to the occupied Syrian Golan. Libya unreservedly condemned the repeated military attacks perpetrated by those groups against Syria.

53. **Mr. Alhammadi** (United Arab Emirates) said that his delegation condemned the illegal practices of Israel, in particular its settlement expansion activity, which continued to accelerate year after year, in contravention of Security Council resolution 2334 (2016). As confirmed by the latest report of the Special Committee, Israel continued to desecrate holy sites, destroy property, confiscate land and restrict freedom of movement in Palestine, and its ongoing blockade of Gaza continued to cause economic stagnation, increase unemployment and aggravate the humanitarian crisis in the Gaza Strip. The worsening economic, social and humanitarian situation in the occupied Palestinian territories as a result of those violations brought misery and despair not only to Palestine but to the whole of the Middle East. Moreover, the actions of Israel hampered international efforts to achieve lasting peace and created a situation which was exploited by extremist and terrorist groups to spread violence in the region.

54. His Government staunchly supported the Palestinian people and would continue to work through its own institutions and in cooperation with the United Nations to ensure that their needs were met. It called on the international community to support the efforts of the Palestinian people to establish their own State and realize their rightful ambitions for sustainable development. The United Arab Emirates supported regional and international efforts to achieve peace in the Middle East and welcomed the signature by the two Palestinian political parties of a reconciliation deal in Cairo on 12 October 2017, under the auspices of the Government of Egypt.

55. His delegation called on Israel to cease its violations of international law and United Nations resolutions, end its occupation of Arab territories and allow Palestinians to exercise their inalienable rights, including the right to establish an independent State of Palestine within 1967 borders, with East Jerusalem as its capital, on the basis of the relevant international agreements, the Arab Peace Initiative and the Madrid principles. The Secretariat should increase its support for the Special Committee, which played an important role in documenting the suffering of the Palestinian people and uncovering the abuses committed by Israel.

56. **Mr. Xie** (China) said that the question of Palestine lay at the heart of the situation in the Middle East and functioned as a yardstick for measuring international justice and impartiality. Seventy years after the adoption of General Assembly resolution 181 (II), Palestinians continued to suffer and Palestine was yet to become an independent State with full sovereignty. That unjust situation must be remedied without delay. Faced with the fragile situation in Palestine, the stalling of peace talks, ongoing settlement expansion and violent conflict, and an increasingly dire humanitarian situation in Gaza, the international community must take urgent collective action to uphold the legitimate rights of the Palestinian people. China resolutely supported their just cause and

their efforts to achieve a politically negotiated two-State solution that would provide for peaceful coexistence between Israel and an independent State of Palestine. China was also in favour of further integration of the State of Palestine into the international community and would make every effort to proceed with the four-point peace plan proposed by the President of China in August 2017. In that plan, China called for increased international efforts to relaunch serious peace negotiations and help both sides to the conflict to build mutual trust and achieve comprehensive and lasting security on the basis of the relevant Security Council resolutions, the principle of land for peace and the Arab Peace Initiative. It also called for the immediate cessation of all violence against civilians, home demolitions and settlement activity in the occupied Palestinian territories and the lifting of the blockade on Gaza. It urged increased international cooperation on the basis of existing processes and mechanisms, with the joint participation of all sides and, lastly, it emphasized the importance of drawing links between peace and development and of the enhancement of Palestine's own development capabilities. China welcomed all efforts aimed at achieving peace in the Middle East and internal reconciliation within Palestine, and would continue to strengthen its cooperation with Palestine with a view to promoting its economic development.

57. **Mr. Kim** In Ryong (Democratic People's Republic of Korea) said that international efforts to end the 50-year Israeli occupation of Arab territories, including the West Bank and East Al-Quds, were stronger than ever in 2017. At the seventeenth Summit of the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries, held in Venezuela in September 2016, the Heads of State and Government had reaffirmed their commitment to promoting international peace and security, including by addressing the situation in the Middle East and the question of Palestine; the Security Council had adopted resolution 2334 (2016) demanding that Israel completely cease all settlement activities in the occupied Palestinian territory; and in the joint declaration issued at the outcome of the Middle East peace conference held in Paris in January 2017, the participants had reaffirmed that a negotiated solution with two States, Israel and Palestine, living side by side in peace and security, was the only way to achieve enduring peace, and had called upon the two sides to refrain from taking unilateral steps that could disrupt the peace process.

58. However, Israel continued to defy the will of the international community and poison the peace process by continuing its occupation of Palestinian territories and expanding its illegal settlements; moreover, those actions came with the support of the United States of America, which had always forced other States to comply with Security Council resolutions but was willing to turn a blind eye in the case of Israel.

59. His delegation reaffirmed its support for the Palestinian people in their struggle to establish an independent State of Palestine with East Al-Quds as its capital, and for the political and legal rights of the Syrian inhabitants of the occupied Syrian Golan. It called on the United States and Israel to heed the will of the international community and to make concerted efforts, in good faith, to resolve the situation in the Middle East in a manner consistent with international law and the relevant United Nations resolutions.

60. **Mr. Bawazir** (Indonesia) said that the ongoing refusal by Israel, the occupying Power, to allow the Special Committee to visit the Occupied Territory reinforced the unfortunate status quo in which Israel incessantly flouted international law by continuing its illegal practices, including settlement construction, demolition of Palestinian buildings and obstruction of humanitarian assistance. Despite the adoption of numerous Security Council resolutions ordering it to cease settlement construction, Israel continued to act with impunity and had even intensified settlement construction since the adoption of Security Council resolution 2334 (2016), demonstrating its wholesale disregard for the will of the international community.

61. Meanwhile, the economic, social and humanitarian conditions of Palestinians continued to deteriorate throughout the Occupied Territory, particularly in Gaza, where a decade-long Israeli blockade had led to increasingly scarce supplies of electricity and water, placed mounting pressure on the health, sanitation and education systems, and brought about one of the highest unemployment rates in the world. His delegation wholeheartedly condemned the abhorrent use by Israel of excessive force against civilians in the West Bank and Gaza, and called on Israel to lift the blockade on Gaza and respect its obligations under international law, in line with the 2004 advisory opinion of the International Court of Justice and the relevant international agreements.

62. While it condemned all violations of international law, regardless of the perpetrators, his delegation underlined that the violations committed by the Israeli occupying Power were far graver than the actions committed — often in retaliation — by Palestine against Israel. Indonesia called for concerted efforts to achieve a political solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict on the basis of the two-State solution, and stressed the crucial importance of the work of the Special Committee

and other United Nations mechanisms in ensuring protection of the rights of the Palestinian people.

Statements made in exercise of the right of reply

63. **Mr. Mounzer** (Syrian Arab Republic) said that it would take an impossible length of time to document the full extent of Israeli acts of aggression and other crimes against the Syrian and Palestinian peoples in the many decades that had passed since the beginning of the Israeli occupation of Arab territories. Faced with yet another avalanche of international condemnation of its crimes, the representative of Israel had once again insisted on insulting and criticizing the work of the Special Committee in a brazen affront to the entire United Nations system. In his statement, the representative of the Israeli occupying Power had omitted to mention that the much-vaunted assistance and medical treatment provided in Israeli hospitals was in fact for the benefit of members of the Nusrah Front and other armed terrorist groups operating in the separation area in the occupied Syrian Golan. According to various reports from reputable international news sources and certain Israeli officials, the aforementioned medical assistance formed part of an extensive programme of direct Israeli support for terrorists in the form of weapons, funds, logistical and military support, fuel, medicines and food, all of which was coordinated by a dedicated unit within the Israeli army. Such support provided openly by Israel to armed terrorist groups rendered it wholly complicit in their crimes.

64. The people of the occupied Syrian Golan were, and would forever remain, Syrian Arabs. The occupied territory where they lived formed an integral part of the Syrian Arab Republic and would one day return to its control. Those inhabitants had no other national identity and were unequivocally opposed to all Israeli attempts to suppress their Syrian identity, including the recent decision by Israel to hold its own municipal elections in the occupied Syrian Golan, a decision which had been explicitly rejected in an official statement issued by representatives of the population.

65. The extent of Israeli crimes in the occupied Arab territories was so severe that Israel even deliberately targeted children, many of whom had been illegally detained by the Israeli authorities, and scores of whom had been killed or permanently maimed over the past year by Israeli mines planted in civilian areas, including near residential areas and playgrounds.

66. **Ms. Abdelhady-Nasser** (Observer for the State of Palestine) said that the international community could not stand by in silence as the delegation of Israel continued to ridicule the work of the Special Committee and make a mockery of international law and the entire United Nations system. In his disrespectful and hostile statement, the representative of Israel had feigned concern about the scarce resources and the need for effective functioning of the United Nations, despite the fact that his Government constantly dismissed the authority of the Organization and not only persisted in inflicting untold harm on every Palestinian man, woman and child living under its occupation and violating their rights and dignity, but also boasted of its intentions to continue to do so, in flagrant violation of international law. Israel had undoubtedly been encouraged to continue its shameless crimes by the impunity afforded to it by the international community for far too long. In addition to its extensive list of reprehensible crimes, Israel continually undermined and obstructed all efforts to end the injustice and secure a just and lasting peace. It was the height of audacity for the representative of Israel to berate the Special Committee while simultaneously refusing to cooperate with it, and to boast of its meagre efforts to facilitate the entry of but a small fraction of the materials required to rebuild the hundreds of thousands of homes and facilities that Israel itself had demolished, thus barely fulfilling its obligations as an occupying Power under international humanitarian law.

67. The reports of the Special Committee were not biased; they contained well-known information, the accuracy of which was beyond reproach, some of it provided by Israeli human rights organizations that had cooperated with the Special Committee. The State of Palestine firmly rejected the spurious allegations made by Israel against the Special Committee and its members, and would never fail in its duty to draw attention to the illegal and unjust practices of Israel as documented in those reports. Her delegation expressed sincere appreciation for the overwhelming number of statements made by other delegations reaffirming the principles of international law and expressing support for the efforts of the Palestinian people to end the illegal occupation and achieve a peaceful solution, so that future generations would not be forced to suffer the same abuses as their ancestors.

Agenda item 59: Economic and other activities which affect the interests of the peoples of the Non-Self-Governing Territories
(*continued*) (A/C.4/72/L.14)

Draft resolution A/C.4/72/L.14: Economic and other activities which affect the interests of the peoples of the Non-Self-Governing Territories

68. **Ms. Rodríguez Camejo** (Cuba), introducing the draft resolution, said that, in the light of the concerns

expressed by petitioners before the Fourth Committee, the text of the draft resolution submitted by the Bureau of the Special Committee, as contained in document A/72/23, had been revised to include new paragraphs mentioning the devastating impact of recent hurricanes on the Non-Self-Governing Territories of Anguilla, the British Virgin Islands, the United States Virgin Islands and the Turks and Caicos Islands, as well as on Puerto Rico, and calling on the administering Powers and the specialized agencies of the United Nations to provide the necessary assistance to the peoples of the Territories affected by hurricanes in order to support their recovery and rebuilding efforts.

69. **Ms. Sharma** (Secretary of the Committee) said that the Plurinational State of Bolivia had joined the sponsors of the draft resolution.

70. **The Chair** said that the draft resolution contained no programme budget implications.

71. **Mr. Arcia Vivas** (Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela) said that his delegation had always emphasized the importance of the economic dimension in decolonization; consequently, it urged the administering Powers to promote the economic development of the Non-Self-Governing Territories, so that those Territories could achieve a viable economic model in the context of the various possible paths to self-determination, including independence. Administering Powers must refrain from engaging in economic or military activities that could negatively affect the interests of the peoples of the Territories or infringe on their inalienable right to enjoy and dispose of their natural resources.

72. His delegation welcomed the references in the draft resolution to the need for the respective administering Powers and United Nations specialized agencies to provide emergency assistance to the Non-Self-Governing Territories that had suffered from the devastating impact of hurricanes Irma and Maria, as well as to Puerto Rico, and to support recovery and rebuilding efforts.

73. *At the request of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, a recorded vote was taken.*

In favour:

Albania, Algeria, Andorra, Angola, Argentina, Armenia, Australia, Austria, Azerbaijan, Bahamas, Bahrain, Bangladesh, Barbados, Belarus, Belgium, Belize, Benin, Bhutan, Bolivia (Plurinational State of), Bosnia and Herzegovina, Botswana, Brazil, Brunei Darussalam, Bulgaria, Burkina Faso, Cabo Verde, Cambodia, Cameroon, Canada, Chile, China, Colombia, Congo, Costa Rica, Croatia, Cuba, Cyprus, Czechia, Democratic People's Republic of Korea, Denmark, Djibouti, Dominican Republic, Ecuador, Egypt, El Salvador, Eritrea, Estonia, Ethiopia, Fiji, Finland, Gabon, Georgia, Germany, Greece, Guatemala, Guinea, Guyana, Honduras, Hungary, Iceland, India, Indonesia, Iran (Islamic Republic of), Iraq, Ireland, Italy, Jamaica, Japan, Jordan, Kazakhstan, Kenya, Kuwait, Lao People's Democratic Republic, Latvia, Lebanon, Lesotho, Libya, Liechtenstein, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Madagascar, Malawi, Malaysia, Maldives, Mali, Malta, Marshall Islands, Mauritania, Mauritius, Mexico, Micronesia (Federated States of), Monaco, Mongolia, Montenegro, Morocco, Mozambique, Myanmar, Namibia, Nauru, Nepal, Netherlands, New Zealand, Nicaragua, Niger, Norway, Oman, Pakistan, Panama, Paraguay, Peru, Philippines, Poland, Portugal, Qatar, Republic of Korea, Republic of Moldova, Romania, Russian Federation, Saint Kitts and Nevis, Saint Lucia, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, Samoa, San Marino, Saudi Arabia, Senegal, Serbia, Sierra Leone, Singapore, Slovakia, Slovenia, South Africa, Spain, Sudan, Suriname, Sweden, Switzerland, Syrian Arab Republic, Thailand, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Timor-Leste, Togo, Tonga, Trinidad and Tobago, Tunisia, Turkey, Ukraine, United Arab Emirates, United Republic of Tanzania, Uruguay, Venezuela (Bolivarian Republic of), Viet Nam, Yemen, Zambia, Zimbabwe.

Against:

Israel, United States of America.

Abstaining:

France, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland.

74. *Draft resolution A/C.4/72/L.14 was adopted by 154 votes to 2, with 2 abstentions.*

75. **Mr. Mazzeo** (Argentina) said that his delegation had voted in favour of the draft resolution on the understanding that the references in the text to the right to self-determination, which, according to General Assembly resolution 1514 (XV) presupposed the existence of a people subjected to alien subjugation, domination and exploitation, were in no way applicable to the question of the Malvinas Islands, South Georgia and South Sandwich Islands and the surrounding maritime areas, because the United Kingdom, in its illegal occupation of the Islands, had expelled their local population and the legitimate Argentine authorities and replaced them with British citizens. All General Assembly resolutions on the question of the Malvinas

Islands, in particular resolution 2065 (XX) and subsequent resolutions, and all resolutions adopted by the Special Committee on the issue to date, had expressly established that the way to put an end to that special and particular colonial situation, in which sovereignty over the Islands and the surrounding maritime areas was disputed, was not through self-determination but rather through a negotiated settlement of the sovereignty dispute between the two parties involved: the United Kingdom and Argentina. Moreover, the General Assembly had expressly ruled out the applicability of the principle of self-determination to the question of the Malvinas Islands in 1985 when it had rejected by a large majority two proposals by the United Kingdom seeking to incorporate the said principle into a draft resolution on that specific question.

76. Furthermore, in resolution 31/49 the General Assembly had called upon the two parties to refrain from taking decisions that would imply introducing unilateral modifications in the situation while the islands were going through the recommended process of negotiation. The unilateral exploration and exploitation by the United Kingdom of the renewable and non-renewable resources of Argentina in the Malvinas Islands, South Georgia Islands and South Sandwich Islands and the surrounding maritime areas, and the conduct of military exercises in the disputed area, were therefore in contravention of that resolution.

Agenda item 62: Implementation of the Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples (*continued*) (A/C.4/72/L.15 and A/C.4/72/L.16)

77. **Ms. Rodríguez Camejo** (Cuba), introducing the two draft resolutions submitted under agenda item 62 (A/C.4/72/L.15 and A/C.4/72/L.16), said that both texts had originally been approved by consensus by the Special Committee on the Situation with regard to the Implementation of the Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples. They had subsequently been revised to include new paragraphs taking into consideration the statements made by petitioners from New Caledonia and Guam, and by the Governor of Guam, expressing concern about the progress of the decolonization processes in their respective Territories and requesting the Special Committee to send visiting missions.

78. **The Chair** said that the draft resolutions contained no programme budget implications.

79. **Mr. Arcia Vivas** (Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela) said that his delegation hoped that progress would be made in the decolonization process on account of the referendum on self-determination to be held in New Caledonia in 2018. It welcomed the incorporation in the draft resolution of the request, expressed by Kanak petitioners, for the administering Power to facilitate a visiting mission to the Territory before the referendum was held, in order to examine the situation on the ground, in particular the composition of the electoral list and measures to ensure that the Kanak people could freely participate in the referendum. He expressed appreciation for the willingness of the administering Power to consider the possibility of facilitating such a mission.

80. Various petitioners had come from Guam to express the urgency of decolonizing the Territory and the obstacles presented by the administering Power, especially with regard to the holding of a Chamorro plebiscite. Petitioners had also expressed their indignation at policies that limited access to their property and ancestral lands, as well as fear concerning the negative impact of the administering Power's expansion of military activities on the environment and access to cultural sites. The people of Guam were involuntarily implicated in regional tensions and lived in fear of being bombed. Member States must recognize the threats faced by Guamanians not only with regard to their self-determination but also to their very lives. His delegation therefore supported the inclusion in the draft resolution of the call for the administering Power to facilitate a visiting mission to the Territory, as well as recognition of the concerns expressed by Guamanians regarding the risks and challenges they faced.

Draft resolution A/C.4/72/L.15: Question of New Caledonia

81. **Ms. Sharma** (Secretary of the Committee) said that Fiji and Papua New Guinea had joined the sponsors of the draft resolution.

82. *Draft resolution A/C.4/72/L.15 was adopted.*

Draft resolution A/C.4/72/L.16: Question of Guam

83. *At the request of the representative of the United States of America, a recorded vote was taken.*

In favour:

Algeria, Angola, Argentina, Azerbaijan, Bahamas, Bahrain, Barbados, Belarus, Belize, Benin, Bhutan, Bolivia (Plurinational State of), Botswana, Brunei Darussalam, Cabo Verde, Cambodia, China, Congo, Cuba, Democratic People's Republic of Korea, Djibouti, Dominican Republic, Ecuador, Egypt, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Fiji, Guinea, Guyana, India, Indonesia, Iran (Islamic

Republic of), Jamaica, Jordan, Kenya, Kuwait, Lao People's Democratic Republic, Lebanon, Lesotho, Libya, Malaysia, Maldives, Mali, Marshall Islands, Mauritius, Micronesia (Federated States of), Mongolia, Mozambique, Myanmar, Namibia, Nauru, Nepal, Nicaragua, Oman, Pakistan, Paraguay, Philippines, Russian Federation, Saint Kitts and Nevis, Saint Lucia, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, Samoa, Saudi Arabia, Senegal, Sierra Leone, Singapore, South Africa, Sudan, Suriname, Syrian Arab Republic, Thailand, Trinidad and Tobago, United Republic of Tanzania, Uruguay, Venezuela (Bolivarian Republic of), Viet Nam, Yemen, Zambia, Zimbabwe.

Against:

France, Iraq, Israel, Japan, Malawi, Morocco, Ukraine, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, United States of America.

Abstaining:

Albania, Andorra, Armenia, Australia, Austria, Bangladesh, Belgium, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Canada, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, Croatia, Cyprus, Czechia, Denmark, El Salvador, Estonia, Finland, Gabon, Georgia, Germany, Greece, Guatemala, Honduras, Hungary, Iceland, Ireland, Italy, Kazakhstan, Latvia, Liechtenstein, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malta, Mauritania, Mexico, Monaco, Montenegro, Netherlands, New Zealand, Norway, Panama, Peru, Poland, Portugal, Qatar, Republic of Korea, Republic of Moldova, Romania, San Marino, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Togo, Tunisia, Turkey, United Arab Emirates.

84. *Draft resolution A/C.4/72/L.16 was adopted by 80 votes to 9, with 62 abstentions.*

85. **Mr. Giacomelli da Silva** (Brazil) said that, although his delegation had voted in favour of the draft resolution on the question of Guam, as it had done in previous years, it was concerned that the resolution was being used for political purposes extraneous to the core mandate of the Committee. Brazil rejected the politicization of resolutions, which was counterproductive for the ultimate goal of decolonization. Certain aspects of the draft resolution, including references to a ruling by a federal court of the United States on the self-determination plebiscite in Guam and the impact of militarization on the environment, required further discussion. Any reference to the involuntary placement of the Territory in the midst of regional tensions should also include a clear condemnation of the unacceptable threats made against Guam by the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, in clear violation of the Charter of the United Nations. Brazil continued to call on the Democratic People's Republic of Korea to fulfil its obligations under Security Council resolutions and urged all parties to resume negotiations, with a view to achieving peace and the denuclearization of the Korean peninsula.

86. **Ms. Green** (Canada) said that although her delegation had fully supported the draft resolution in past years, it had reservations about the discussion of an ongoing judicial process. Guam had in fact appealed the ruling to which preambular paragraph 20 referred, which meant that the General Assembly should not comment on the case. Canada had therefore abstained.

87. **Mr. Kashkett** (United States of America) said that for the first time in 20 years, his delegation had been forced to vote against the draft resolution on the question of Guam on account of the counterproductive additions introduced by the Venezuelan delegation and others who sought to use the text to launch a political attack.

88. His country had the sovereign right to carry out military activities on Guam in accordance with its national security interests; it was facile to assume that such military presence was necessarily harmful to the rights and interests of, or incompatible with the wishes of, the people of the Territory. New language in the draft resolution presented the baseless claim that the people of Guam were uniformly against the military activities of the United States; there was also no proof that those activities harmed the environment or contravened the wishes of those people. His delegation rejected the unnecessary request for a study on the environmental impact of military activities on Guam as a waste of United Nations resources. In addition, the new language referring to tensions in the region dangerously mischaracterized the situation. While it was necessary to address the incessant provocations of North Korea, it was incorrect to conclude that the entire region faced tensions as a result of one nation's conduct. The only reference to North Korea that belonged in the draft resolution was a clear condemnation of the threats made by Kim Jong-un against Guam and the threats to international peace posed by the regime's continued ongoing nuclear and ballistic missile programmes.

89. His delegation also objected to the criticism of the recent United States federal court ruling halting the planned plebiscite on the political status of Guam. Although his delegation had long supported the right to self-determination for Guamanians, the legislature of the Territory had passed a law restricting the right to

vote in the plebiscite to those individuals with roots on Guam since 1950, thus omitting many members of the highly multicultural society whose residents included indigenous Chamorro, migrants from other parts of the United States and the descendants of immigrants from across East Asia. The court had therefore found such limitations to be in clear violation of the guarantees against ethnic and race-based restrictions on the exercise of voting rights enshrined in the United States Constitution. The fact that Guam had appealed the ruling was insufficient grounds to reference it in the draft resolution. The right to self-determination in a Non-Self-Governing Territory must be exercised by all of the people of the Territory, not just one portion of the population. The federal court ruling had therefore upheld the core principles on non-discrimination with regard to the protection of universal voting rights as contained in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights.

90. Although his country's championing of self-determination was rooted in its own colonial experience, it also supported the right of peoples to choose integration or the maintenance of the status quo rather than independence. The Committee must eschew its outdated preference for independence as a one-size-fits-all solution, especially when presented with evidence that many peoples preferred other options.

91. Recalling that General Assembly resolution 850 (IX) had stipulated that all visiting missions must be conducted in agreement with the administering Member, his country did not support the sending of a visiting mission to Guam. It should be remembered that all resolutions on decolonization, including General Assembly resolution 1514 (XV), were non-binding and did not necessarily state or reflect international law. The United States had called for a vote on the draft resolution and had voted against it.

92. **Mr. Lim** Tong Hai (Singapore) said that although the draft resolution had been adopted by consensus in previous years, new elements added to the text that year had prevented consensus. His delegation urged all parties to achieve consensus in the future, taking into consideration complex security issues. The Territory of Guam was situated in a geographically strategic area in the Asia-Pacific region, which in recent months had been subject to provocative threats made by one country in violation of the Charter of the United Nations. It should be recognized that the existing defence arrangements on Guam contributed to stability in the Asia-Pacific region.

The meeting rose at 12.55 p.m.